Review: The building blocks of a project dream team

In the previous video, we explored some considerations for choosing your project team and assigning their roles and responsibilities. Let's recap what you learned and expand upon what to think about when building your project team.
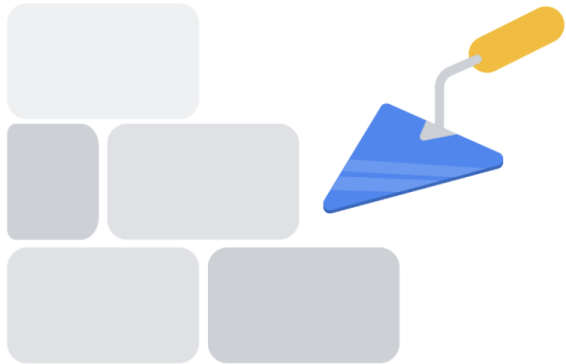
Too big, too small, or just right?

Once you lay the foundation for your project by outlining your goals and expectations, it is time to build your dream team! Though before we can build our dream team, we need to figure out how many people we need. This number will largely depend on the size of the project itself. Complex projects with large divisions of work will usually require larger project teams. Simple projects with straightforward expectations may only require a few people on the project team. As a project manager, it is your job to help find the right balance based on what is needed.

The right skills and abilities to fill the role

Multiple roles exist in every project. On smaller teams, multiple roles may be filled by one person. To meet the needs of more specialized projects, project managers might require people who have the necessary **technical skills.** Technical skills are the skills specific to the task that needs to be performed. For example, on the Office Green project, necessary technical skills may include indoor landscaping design for the layout of the plants within the offices and floral design of plant arranging.

Technical skills are highly valued, but they are not the only skills that are important for high functioning teams. Interpersonal skills, also known as people skills or soft skills, such as patience and conflict mediation, can help team members. This allows the team to blend their technical expertise with collaborative skills in order to get the job done. When a team applies their interpersonal skills, they can minimize team-related issues.

Problem-solving skills are a must for all team members, especially when it comes to large, complex projects. As a project manager, you will not be able to solve every problem for your team. At some point, they will need to use their own judgment to problem-solve and get the work done.

An underrated skill set for project team members are **leadership skills.** Strong leadership skills help team members navigate organizational boundaries and effectively communicate with stakeholders to generate buy-in.

Who is available?

In projects, the availability of your team is always a big concern. This is especially true in Matrix organizations, where team members have multiple bosses. It is not uncommon to pull a team member onto another project before your project is complete. In a perfect world, you only pick those who can stay on the project for its entire life cycle. You may find that you don't get to pick certain members of your team at all, which is called a pre-assignment. In these cases, the sponsor assigns team members to your project.

Keep in mind that you need to value diversity early on when building your team. On diverse teams, everyone is able to use their unique professional and personal experiences to contribute to a more successful project. Diversity is best leveraged when it is acknowledged and highlighted as an asset. Many people avoid discussing their differences, but if you encourage those conversations, you will find a richer understanding and greater creativity that comes from people working together across identity differences. To do this effectively, it is important to dedicate time early on in the team building process to develop trust between team members. Team members who understand one another are more likely to trust each other and feel safe sharing different points of view or offer a competing perspective. This will also allow them to more easily offer constructive feedback or be supportive if the team dynamics face challenges at any point.

What motivates them?

Be sure to take note of the motivation level of your team members and the impact it may have on your project. Just because a person is pre-assigned to a project, doesn't necessarily mean they have low interest in it, but a person who proactively volunteered for it may have additional motivation to do the work.

As a project manager, it is your responsibility to engage your team and keep them motivated. This is where your influence as a leader is required to keep the team engaged and ready to overcome any obstacles that may appear. Engaging in a respectful manner and maintaining a positive outlook with your team during times of adversity are simple ways to keep your team motivated.

Key takeaway

In summary, team size, skills, availability, and motivation are the building blocks to creating your very own dream team. Always keep in mind that a project manager does not just select dream teams, they create dream teams through collaboration under great leadership. This is the leadership that you will provide as a project manager.